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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
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SUBJECT: AN EMOTIONAL KARZAI LAUNCHES ACTION PLAN FOR
PEACE, JUSTICE, AND RECONCILIATION

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) President Karzai broke into tears during his December 10 speech launching Afghanistan's Action Plan for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation. While recounting the atrocities suffered by the Afghan people over the past 30 years, he noted that Afghans had suffered at the hands of both terrorists and NATO air strikes. He proclaimed December 10 a National Day of Remembrance for war victims in Afghanistan. The Action Plan announced by Karzai was originally adopted by the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) in December 2005 but had since fallen on the backburner. One year later, President Karzai's speech - symbolically given on International Human Rights Day - was an attempt to refocus GOA, civil society and international community efforts on the issue of transitional justice and war crimes. However, full implementation of this Action Plan, which would presumably implicate some members of the GOA, faces a long, politically-charged road ahead. END SUMMARY

ACTION PLAN ON TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

¶2. (U) The Action Plan is a government-approved strategy to address the past atrocities committed in Afghanistan by responding to the needs of victims, ensuring accountability and promoting reconciliation. It was drafted by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), in consultation with the GOA and United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), and was originally adopted by Presidential Decree in December 2005. Unfortunately, no progress on implementation had been made since then, so the AIHRC orchestrated President Karzai's launching of the plan on December 10 in order to reinvigorate efforts to implement it. The Action Plan has five key components: (1) acknowledgement of the suffering of Afghans, including the designation of a National Day of Remembrance, creation of

national memorial sites and a national museum; (2) creation of credible and accountable state institutions by vetting civil service employees for involvement in past atrocities, and reform of the judiciary; (3) truth-seeking commissions and documentation of past atrocities; (4) promotion of national reconciliation and unity through public debate and awareness; and (5) establishment of accountability mechanisms to bring to justice those responsible for grave human rights abuses.

¶3. (SBU) Contacts at UNAMA note that a lack of political will has stalled implementation of the Action Plan thus far. According to Javier Leon Diaz who leads UNAMA's work on transitional justice, there is not enough civil society involvement in the plan's implementation, probably because there was very little civil society involvement in the plan's creation. Furthermore, the plan identifies seven ministries as having roles in its implementation, but Mr. Leon Diaz is doubtful that these ministries are even aware of their roles.

UNAMA staff have noted that most of the ministers who were around when the plan was drafted in 2005 were subsequently not confirmed by the Parliament; as a result, there is very little ministerial awareness and support for the plan.

POLITICS BEHIND THE SCENES EVOKE TEARS

¶4. (SBU) Not surprisingly, some controversy surrounded Karzai's plans to launch the Action Plan on December 10. The program began significantly late because, as its scheduled start time approached, AIHRC Chairperson Dr. Sima Samar was reportedly still negotiating with the Palace on

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whether President Karzai would in fact use his speech to launch the Action Plan and go into detail about its purpose or whether he would simply cite Afghanistan's achievements to date in Human Rights. (Note: Members of Parliament such as Ustad Abdrab Rasoul Sayaf and Burhanuddin Rabbani are rumored to have instigated some resistance to the President's planned announcement because they or their allies may be implicated if violators of human rights abuses are prosecuted.)

¶5. (U) Ultimately, of course, Karzai did announce the plan. Interestingly, however, he did not use any of the remarks prepared for him by the AIHRC. Instead, he spoke from the heart in Pashto and Dari, recounting the suffering Afghans had endured over the past 30 years. He noted that Afghans had suffered atrocities from the Russians and the terrorists, as well as from NATO bombings. "Unfortunately, innocent Afghans are being sacrificed through terrorism and NATO bombardment...We cannot prevent the terrorists from coming from Pakistan, and we cannot prevent the coalition from bombing the terrorists; our children are dying because of this," he said. (Note: One Embassy FSN translator observed that the thrust of Karzai's speech, including the reference to NATO bombings, was to highlight Afghanistan's perpetual helplessness, the theme that appeared to evoke the most emotion as he spoke. End Note) Karzai's voice cracked and tears streamed down his face as he described his meeting with the civilian victims of NATO air strikes and other tragedies.

¶6. (U) It was a scene that clearly resonated with the audience. In a very emotional moment, several audience members -- including members of the AIHRC, Foreign Minister Spanta, and even Karzai's own security detail -- were seen wiping away tears. Later, Karzai added, "It is the Afghans, responsibility to save their country from this cruelty. It is up to us to be united and not to be in need of foreign assistance. The only way to get rid of the current cruelty is to know the reality and to be united. We thank the world for supporting us, but the international community cannot save us unless we save ourselves... NATO and

Coalition forces are with us but not permanently.8

17. (SBU) COMMENT: Afghan National TV broadcast the speech live; however, subsequent rumors alleged that media outlets were pressured not to show Karzai,s tears when re-televising the speech that evening. Indeed, Ariana Television and Tolo TV cut the segments showing Karzai at his most emotional during their evening broadcasts. Nader Nadery of the AIHRC, says he asked Ariana TV officials whether they had been asked not to show Karzai,s weeping, but was unable to confirm this, as Ariana TV officials simply replied they did not think it was appropriate to show the President of the nation crying. Even so, Nadery noted that many Afghans caught the live broadcast earlier that day and were significantly moved by Karzai,s emotion, and others have told us they saw the tears in re-broadcasts of the speech. &I am a very outspoken critic of President Karzai, but yesterday even I was touched by his remarks. And during a Voice of America program that I did later that evening, many people called in and spoke of the President,s emotion. I think for the first time many of them saw him not as the President, but as a human,8 Nadery stated.

18. (SBU) COMMENT continued: Nadery noted that while Karzai,s &off-the-cuff8 remarks were touching, parts of the speech drafted for him by the AIHRC were noticeably absent. He omitted any mention of the Action Plan,s non-amnesty clause for rights violators. He also omitted language that reconciliation does not equal impunity and that Afghanistan will address past wrongs committed. He did announce the Action Plan and designate December 10 a National Day of Remembrance for victims but failed to explain any

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details of the Action Plan. While the public may have momentarily viewed their tearful President as more human than politician, Karzai,s ability to portray himself as just another Afghan deeply disturbed by the suffering of his people - all while purposely omitting the controversial details of the Action Plan - reveals his political shrewdness and reflects the delicate balancing act that will be required as we and others in the international community work with the GOA to advance the transitional justice agenda. END COMMENT

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